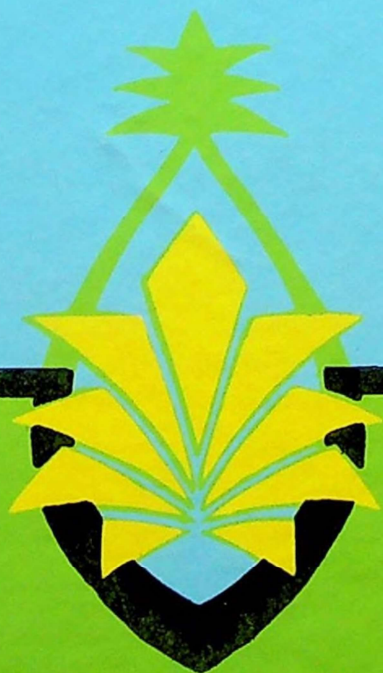
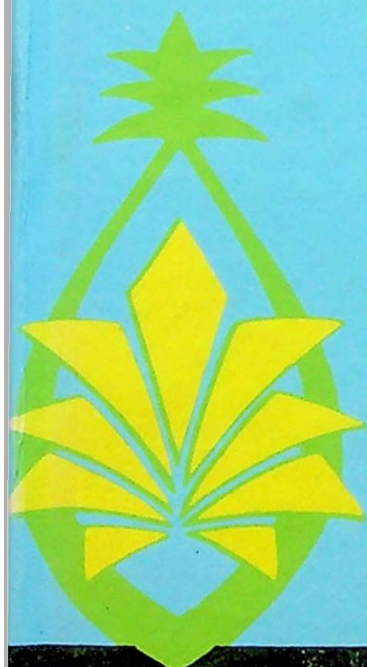


S. ABUL A'LA MAUDUDI

THE
MEANING
OF
THE
QURĀN
Vol. XVI



ISLAMIC PUBLICATIONS (Pvt) LTD.
LAHORE - PAKISTAN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

CXII

AL-IKHLĀS الاخلاص

INTRODUCTION

Name

Al-Ikhlāṣ is not merely the name of this Sūrah but also the title of its contents, for it deals exclusively with *Tauḥīd*. The other Sūrahs of the Qur'ān generally have been designated after a word occurring in them, but in this Sūrah the word *Ikhlāṣ* has occurred nowhere. It has been given this name in view of its meaning and subject matter. Whoever understands it and believes in its teaching, will get rid of *shirk* (polytheism) completely.

Period of Revelation

Whether it is a Makki or a Madani Sūrah is disputed, and the difference of opinion has been caused by the traditions which have been related concerning the occasion of its revelation. We give them below ad seriatum;

(1) Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd has reported that the Quraish said to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace): "Tell us of the ancestry¹ of your Lord." Thereupon this Sūrah was sent down. (Ṭabarānī).

(2) Abul-'Āliyah has related on the authority of Ḥaḍrat Ubayy bin Ka'b that the polytheists said to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace): "Tell us of your Lord's ancestry." Thereupon Allah sent down this Sūrah. (Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Jarīr, Tirmidhi, Bukhārī in *At-Tārikh*, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ḥākim, Baihaqī). Tirmidhi has related a tradition on the same theme from Abul-'Āliyah, which does not contain any reference to Ḥaḍrat Ubayy bin Ka'b, and has declared it to be more authentic.

(3) Ḥaḍrat Jābir bin 'Abdullah has stated that a bedouin (according to other traditions, some people) said to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace): "Tell us of your Lord's ancestry." Thereupon Allah sent down this Sūrah. (Abū Ya'lā, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ṭabarānī in *Al-Ausaf*, Baihaqī. Abū Nu'aim in *Al-Hilyah*).

(4) 'Ikrimah has related a tradition from Ibn 'Abbās, saying that a group of the Jews, including Ka'b bin Ashraf, Ḥuyayy bin Akhtab and others, came before the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and said: "O Muḥammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), tell us of the attributes of your Lord, Who has sent you as a Prophet." Thereupon Allah sent down this Sūrah. (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn 'Adī, Baihaqī in *Al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt*).

1. The custom among the Arabs was that whenever they wanted to be introduced to a stranger, they would say: *Insibhu lanā*: "Tell us of his ancestry", for among them the foremost thing required to be known was the lineage of the stranger and the tribe he belonged to. That is why when they wanted to ask the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) who his Lord was and what were his attributes, they said: *Insib lanā Rabbaka*: "Tell us of your Lord's lineage."

In addition to these, some other traditions also have been cited by Ibn Taimiyyah in his commentary of Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ, which are as follows:

(5) Ḥaḍrat Anas has stated that some Jews of Khaiber came before the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and they said: "O Abul-Qāsim, Allah created the angels from light, Adam from rotten clay, Iblis from the flame of fire, the sky from smoke, and the earth from the foam of water. Now tell us about your Lord (of what He is made)." The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) did not give any reply to this question. Then Gabriel came and he said: "O Muḥammad, say to them: *Huwa Allahu aḥad.*"

(6) 'Amir bin at-Tufail said to the Holy Prophet: "O Muḥammad, what do you call us to?" The Holy Prophet replied: "To Allah." 'Amir said: "Then, tell us of what He is made, whether of gold, silver, or iron?" Thereupon this Sūrah was sent down.

(7) Dahḥāk, Qatādah and Muqātil have stated that some Jewish rabbis came before the Holy Prophet, and they said: "O Muḥammad, tell us what is your Lord like, so that we may believe in you. Allah in the Torah has sent down His description. Kindly tell us of what He is made, what is His sex, whether He is made of gold, copper, brass, iron, or silver, and whether He eats and drinks. Also tell us from whom He has inherited the world, and who will inherit it after Him." Thereupon Allah sent down this Sūrah.

(8) Ibn 'Abbās has reported that a deputation of the Christians of Najrān along with seven priests visited the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace), and they said: "O Muḥammad, tell us what is your Lord like and of what substance He is made." The Holy Prophet replied: "My Lord is not made from any substance: He is unique

and exalted above everything." Thereupon Allah sent down this Sūrah.

These traditions show that different people on different occasions had questioned the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) about the essence and nature of the God to Whose service and worship he invited the people, and on every occasion he recited by Allāh's command this very Sūrah in response. First of all, the pagans of Quraish asked him this question in Makkah, and in reply this Sūrah was sent down. Then, at Madinah, sometimes the Christians, and sometimes the other people of Arabia, asked him questions of this nature, and every time Allah inspired him to recite this very Sūrah in answer to them. In each of these traditions, it has been said that this Sūrah was revealed on this or that occasion. From this one should not form the impression that all these traditions are mutually contradictory. The fact is that whenever there existed with the Holy Prophet a verse or a Sūrah previously revealed in respect of a particular question or matter, and later the same question was presented before him, Allah inspired him to recite the same verse or Sūrah to the people as it contained the answer to their question. The reporters of *Hadith* describe the same thing, saying: When such and such a question or matter was presented before the Holy Prophet, such and such a verse or Sūrah was revealed. This has also been described as repetition of revelation, i.e. the revelation of a verse or Sūrah several times.

Thus, the fact is that this Sūrah is Makkī, rather in view of its subject-matter a Sūrah revealed in the earliest period at Makkah, when detailed verses of the Qur'ān dealing with the essence and attributes of Allah Almighty had not yet been revealed, and the people hearing the Holy Prophet's invitation to Allah, wanted to know

what was his Lord like to whose worship and service he was calling them. Another proof of this Sūrah's being one of the earliest Sūrahs to be revealed is that when in Makkah Umayyah bin Khalaf, the master of Ḥadrat Bilāl, made him lie down on burning sand and placed a heavy stone on his chest, Bilāl used to cry "*Aḥad, Aḥad!*" This word was derived from this very Sūrah.

Theme and Subject-Matter

A little consideration of the traditions regarding the occasion of the revelation of this Sūrah, shows what were the religious concepts of the world at the time the Holy Prophet began to preach the message of *Tauḥīd*. The idolatrous polytheists were worshipping gods made of wood, stone, gold, silver and other substances. These gods had a form, shape and body. The gods and goddesses were descended from each other. No goddess was without a husband and no god without a wife. They stood in need of food and drink and their devotees arranged these for them. A large number of the polytheists believed that God assumed human form and there were some people who descended from Him. Although the Christians claimed to believe in One God, yet their God also had at least a son, and besides the Father and Son, the Holy Ghost also had the honour of being an associate in Godhead; so much so that God had a mother and a mother-in-law too. The Jews also claimed to believe in One God, but their God too was not without physical, material and other human qualities and characteristics. He went for a stroll, appeared in human form, wrestled with a seryant of His, and was father of a son, Ezra. Besides these religious communities, the Zoroastrians were fire worshippers, and the Sabeans star-worshippers. Under such conditions when the people were invited to believe in Allah, the One, Who had no associate, it was inevitable that questions arose

in the minds as to what kind of a God it was, Who was One and Only Lord and invitation to believe in Whom was being given at the expense of all other gods and deities. It is a miracle of the Qur'ān that in a few words briefly it answered all the questions and presented such a clear concept of the Being of Allah as destroyed all polytheistic concepts, without leaving any room for the ascription of any of the human qualities to His Being.

Merit and Importance

That is why the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace) held this Sūrah in great esteem, and he made the Muslims realize its importance in different ways so that they recited it frequently and disseminated it among the people. For it states the foremost and fundamental doctrine of Islam (viz. *Tauḥīd*) in four such brief sentences as are immediately impressed on human memory and can be read and recited easily. There are a great number of the traditions of *Ḥadīth*, which show that the Holy Prophet on different occasions and in different ways told the people that this Sūrah is equivalent to one-third of the Qur'ān. Several *aḥādīth* on this subject have been related in Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Da'ūd, Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Musnad Aḥmad, Tabarānī and other books, on the authority of Abū Sa'īd Khudrī, Aḥū Hurairah, Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī, Abū ad-Dardā', Mu'ādh bin Jabal, Jābir bin 'Abdullah, Ubayy bin Ka'b, Umm Kulthūm bint 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait, Ibn 'Umar, Ibn Mas'ūd, Qatādah bin an-Nu'mān, Anas bin Mālik, and Abū Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with all of them). The commentators have given many explanations of the Holy Prophet's this saying. But in our opinion it simply means that the religion presented by the Qur'ān is based on three doctrines: *Tauḥīd*, Apostleship and the Hereafter. This Sūrah teaches *Tauḥīd*, pure and undefiled. Therefore, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) regarded it as equal to one-third of the Qur'ān.

A tradition on the authority of Ḥaḍrat ‘Ā’ishah has been related in Bukhārī, Muslim and other collections of the *Aḥādith*, saying that the Holy Prophet sent a man as leader of an expedition. During the journey he concluded his recitation of the Qur’ān in every Prayer with *Qul Huwa-Allahu aḥad*. On their return his companions mentioned this before the Holy Prophet. He said: Ask him why he did so. When the man was asked, he replied: In this Sūrah the attributes of the Merciful God have been stated; therefore, I love to recite it again and again. When the Holy Prophet heard this reply, he said to the people: “Inform him that Allah holds him in great love and esteem.”

A similar incident has been related in Bukhārī, on the authority of Ḥaḍrat Anas. He says: “A man from among the Anṣār led the Prayers in the Qubā Mosque. His practice was that in every *rak‘ah* he first recited *Qul Huwa Allah* and then would join another Sūrah to it. The people objected to it and said to him: “Don’t you think that *Qul Huwa Allah* is by itself enough? Why do you join another Sūrah to it? You should either recite only this Sūrah, or should leave it and recite some other Sūrah. He said: I cannot leave it, I would rather give up leadership in the Prayer, if you so desired.” The people did not approve that another man be appointed leader instead of him. At last, the matter was brought before the Holy Prophet. He asked the man, “What prevents you from conceding what your companions desire? What makes you recite this particular Sūrah in every *rak‘ah*?” The man submitted: “I have great love for it.” The Holy Prophet remarked: “Your this love for this Sūrah has earned you entry into Paradise.”